

Against the Grain

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People Profile: Brad Marcum

Editor

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The similarities between **Google Spreadsheets** and **Excel** are apparent from a simple glance. Both have an unlimited number of cells that can be manipulated in a variety of ways. Standard features include the ability to change the appearance of fonts, to add colors for emphasis and organization, and possibilities of adding and deleting rows, wrapping text, and inserting formulas. In addition, the **Spreadsheet** team at **Google** has added features since the product's debut that have considerably narrowed the gap between it and **Excel**. Among these are the AutoFill feature, an improved A-Z/Z-A sort bar, and the ability to freeze columns and to create charts (albeit with fewer templates than offered by **Excel**).

At the same time that the **Spreadsheet** updates have helped bridge the gap between it and **Excel**, they have also created new differences between the two. While **Excel** still has the upper hand in some data manipulation areas, including filtering abilities, it is users of the Web-based product who can take advantage of 2.0 integrations into their spreadsheets. One of the newest **Spreadsheet** features is the ability to create and distribute forms for others to complete. The results are automatically time stamped and integrated into the desired spreadsheet. This allows users to collect and input data from others without granting them access to the spreadsheet itself. Another function unique to **Google's** product is the ability to import data from other Web-based sources, such as stock information from **Google Finance** or your favorite RSS feeds, for example.

For what it does offer, **Google Spreadsheets** deserves to be counted as a useful tool for both individual users and collaborators alike. The sharing, publishing, and chatting features that make collaborating with **Documents** useful also apply to **Spreadsheets**. In

addition, users will find that the **Spreadsheets** design team does take into account user preferences and requests as indicated by several pages on their site. A team blog announces the latest additions and updates. A "Known Issues Page" identifies problems with the product and reports on the status of fixes, and the "Suggest a Feature" page serves as a poll of sorts to help the designers decide what **Excel**-like features to add next.

Presentations

The **Presentations** application of **Google Docs**, the youngest member of the **Google Docs** family, was released in September 2007. If it is to be compared to **Microsoft's PowerPoint**, **Google Docs' Presentations** application could be considered bare bones. It allows users to create slides that have photos, links, charts and text. But, it does not contain any of the bells and whistles of **PowerPoint**. There is no audio, no animation, and the templates and backgrounds are limited. This may be a drawback for some users, especially in the business realm where customization and branded templates are standard. However, for many others, this focus on content as opposed to the tool is refreshing. The power of the presentation application is the ability to collaborate and share your work. Users can be in any location while viewing and editing the presentation. The edits and changes appear instantly. When using **Presentations** in front of an audience, one can project the slides onto a physical screen to be seen by the audience and others can view the presentation virtually by just following a link. The application is also paired with **Google Chat** so that discussion of the presentation can take place in a virtual environment. One must have a **Google** account to participate in the chat. While one can also upload or import slides from **PowerPoint** into **Google Docs**, users will lose many of the features of **PowerPoint** in this uploading process.

Downsides include difficulties backing up

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against the grain people profile

Brad Marcum

BORN & LIVED: Irvine, KY. I recently bought a house and moved to Richmond, Kentucky.

FAMILY: Single with two sisters and a large extended family.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I am an active presenter at regional and national conferences and primarily work with distance education students.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: I enjoy technology and spend a lot of time on the Web and tinkering with computers and other gadgets. I love to read, although my big screen tv has usurped a good chunk of my free time lately.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Facebook apps that make you invite your friends to see results.

PHILOSOPHY: Forget "equivalent," I want "better!"

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Almost impossible to predict. Anyone predicting anything is just wildly guessing. That said, I predict we will move even further down the road toward becoming information consultants and bearers of expertise rather than the traditional role of "keepers of knowledge." 🐼



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Cindy Judd

BORN & LIVED: Orlando, FL; lived in Orlando, FL, Florence, KY, and Berea, KY.
EARLY LIFE: I taught high school English and drama for six years before becoming a librarian.

FAMILY: Married with twin girls and a son.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I have been a librarian for almost seven years; worked at **Berea College** for four years, and at **EKU** for two and a half; serve on two **ALA** committees.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: I enjoy watching college football and basketball and spending time with my family.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *The Kite Runner*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and *The Glass Castle*. 🐼